



US ISSN 0010-1443

THE

COLONIAL NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 4411

Huntsville, Alabama 35802

J. C. Spilman, Editor

Volume 12, No. 3

October, 1973

Serial No. 38



We the Subscribers being appointed by the honorable General Assembly a Committee to inspect the Coppers made by Samuel Bishop and others, of the Copper Mint Company at New Haven do hereby Certify that we have inspected Ten thousand five hundred and twelve pounds & $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound weight of Coppers and approved thereof for Circulation

New Haven May 9th
1787

David Austin

Ezra Cuttenden

Samuel Beale

Committee

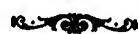


THE HAWLEY-MOORE CONNECTICUT COPERS INSPECTION CERTIFICATE



Copyright © The Colonial Newsletter, 1973

Sequential page 412

LETTERS and TECHNICAL NOTES**THE HAWLEY-MOORE CONNECTICUT COPPERS INSPECTION CERTIFICATE.**

(TN-39)

- As related by C.H. Hawley to ye Editor.

From time to time severe hurricanes sweep up into New England causing damage or destruction to buildings situated near streams in areas subject to flash flooding. During the 1950's one such unfortunate building was that of the Connecticut Historical Society. The storage area used by the Society was located in the basement and included, among other important things, the coin collection of the Society!

Cyril H. Hawley, at that time President of the Hartford Numismatic Society, together with Dick Moore, another officer, received a hurry-up call for assistance from the Director of the Historical Society, and through their efforts the coin collection was saved from damage by the flood waters.

You can imagine the confusion throughout the upper floors after that. However, after much effort and patience the mess was cleaned up and it was during that time as Hawley and Moore were sorting out a mixture of colonial paper money and other miscellaneous documents that had been donated to the Historical Society that they discovered an inspection certificate dated May 9, 1787 for Connecticut Coppers coined at New Haven.

This certificate, signed by David Austin, Ebenezer Chittenden and Isaac Beers is reproduced on the frontispiece of this issue. At the very bottom margin of the certificate, in a different hand, is the notation:

2/3rd is \$11101.11. — one 20 is \$70-1-8-1 $\frac{1}{2}$

Along with the certificate was another sheet of paper containing a letter of transmittal to the Honorable James Wadsworth signed by John Goodrich who was one of the members of the "Company for Coining Coppers." Just above Wadsworth's name is another notation in the same hand as that above:

*Return of the Coin
age of Coppers from
May 1786 to May 1787.*

We assume that both notations were made by Mr. Wadsworth or some other official while calculating the amount due the Treasury or while preparing the certificate and transmittal letter for permanent filing. The text of the transmittal letter is the following:

9 May 1787 New Haven

Respected Sir,

I have forwarded a certificate of the coppers
inspected since our last return it will be delivered by
Mr. Beers who is at Hartford - within the course of a week or
ten days wee expect to forward the coppers to the Treasurer -

I am respected Sir, with esteem
your humble Servant

Honorable James Wadsworth
Hartford

John Goodrich

A certificate similiar to this one is reported by S.S.Crosby in his "Early Coins of America" on page 233; however, it is obviously of later date than the one discovered by Hawley and Moore.

Unfortunately there is no other background data that would help with additional historical identification of the source of the certificate. The only person who might have been of help was the Curator of the Connecticut Historical Society who had died several years previously. None of the records of the Historical Society mentioned the certificate in particular.

It has been quite some time since the discovery of the certificate in the 1950's but so far as we know it has not been brought to the general attention of numismatists, and we hope that it will be of interest to our Patrons.

As ye Editor has thought about the fragmented history of the New Haven Mint of the Connecticut Coppers and this particular certificate with its letter of transmittal, there are a number of assumptions that can be drawn that may be of value to others interested in this topic. The first is that there must have been an earlier certificate than this one of 9 May 1787 -- this is indicated by Goodrich's words ... "inspected since our last return ...". Another comes from the annotation "Return of the Coinage of Coppers from May 1786 to May 1787" which might indicate that the certificate represented a full years production, or that it was to be included in the master file for this twelve month period.

Damon G. Douglas has indicated that the first issue of coinage from the New Haven Mint was on February 9, 1786 (from "The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles ..." as reported by Douglas in note #44 of his manuscript "James Jarvis and the

Fugio Coppers" in the library of the American Numismatic Society). It could be that the unusual dating on the 9th on the month was derived from this reported February 9th date of the first issue of coinage. It also leads one to wonder whether this first issue of coinage bore the date 1786, or 1785 ?

Another assumption that seems reasonable is that the New Haven Mint of the Company for Coining Coppers was - in fact - regularly inspected by the Committee of the Assembly and certified to release its product for circulation, as well as to assure the required 1/20 payment to the Treasury every six months. Carrying this line of reasoning one step further we might anticipate that the inspection was on a three month cycle, that is -- May 9, Aug. 9, Nov. 9, Feb. 9, etc. and it would be interesting to learn whether any of our Patrons know of the existence of other records and certificates that may bear on this subject. Crosby reported only on the initial and terminal activities of the New Haven Mint but there must certainly be other records such as those of the Connecticut Treasurer that can throw additional light on this subject, or other inspection certificates such as the one reported here. Can any of our Patrons advise us on this ?

There are two features of the handwritten text of the Hawley-Moore certificate that indicate a need for close examination of the original document. In two places there appear to have been changes and enlargements of these two areas are shown below. The first is in the stated weight of coppers where the word Ten seems to have been modified from some different amount. The other is in the date where May seems to have been changed.



The image shows a handwritten certificate in cursive script. The text reads "Ten thousand May 9th". There are significant changes in the "Ten thousand" section, particularly in the "Ten" and "thousand". The "May 9th" section is also affected, with the "May" appearing to be written over or altered.

As we worked from photocopies and not from the original certificate we cannot be certain as to the nature of these "changes" other than to observe that they indicate a need for further investigation and study. The photocopy used for the frontispiece has been cleaned up by the removal of many of the spots, blotches and other defects to make it more legible; accordingly, the apparent changes shown in the enlargements above do not appear on the frontispiece.

In any event, this Hawley-Moore Inspection Certificate dated May 9th, 1787 certainly gives additional credibility to the long established belief in a Connecticut Coppers mint located in New Haven.



RESEARCH FORUM

The following comments have been received relative to questions published in recent RESEARCH FORUM sections of CNL. Our Patrons are invited to send us their thoughts on these comments as well as the basic questions. We have referenced only the title and page number of the original question in the discussions that follow -- please refer back to the earlier issues for the complete question.

- ● Regarding RF-43 (CNL, April 1973, p.398) Why were the Early American Halfpence called coppers rather than halfpence, and what is the origin of the term "coppers"?

● from Walter H. Breen
Berkeley, California

The reason is clear enough -- "Coppers" merely meant copper coins, and the pieces were not called halfpence because they did not pass as such. Crosby cites various coppers as passing at 14 to the shilling, which automatically rules out their being valued at a halfpenny apiece.

● from Charles E. Funk, Jr.
East Granby, Connecticut

What bugs me even more than the question posed is, "When, and why, did the Connecticut coppers begin to be mis-called 'cents'?" The questioner is quite correct in stating that Connecticut's coinage is properly referred to as "Connecticut coppers." The coins are neither "cents" nor "halfpence".

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) traces the use of "a copper" or the plural, "coppers", in reference to copper money, at least to the early 18th century, and possibly to Shakespeare (*Love's Labour Lost*, Act iv, Scene iii, "If so, our copper buyes no better treasure.") Certainly, by the time of the Connecticut legislation, this term had clearly become accepted, and widespread, to refer to copper coinage, particularly halfpence. The very quotation cited in RF-43 says as much; supplementary evidence can also be found in the Massachusetts legislation of the same era (see Crosby, pp. 233ff.) and in that of New Jersey.

As to the origin of the term -- that is a little hard to answer specifically. The answer really lies in the habit of English-speaking people to call certain objects by the name of the material of which they're made. Thus, the OED goes on to point out that it's not only money made of copper that has been called "coppers". A large copper cooking vessel, or laundry tub, has been called a "copper". So, too, has a copper drinking vessel, a copper plate on which designs have been etched, the copper sheathing of a sea-going vessel. Quite similar use has been made of "iron" -- an "iron" may be a tool for smoothing laundry, a club for batting golf balls, a tool for soldering. Back to numismatics, a "nickel" (which is really mostly copper and even, during World War II, contained no nickel at all) is a U.S. five-cent piece today, but was a U.S. one-cent piece back in the period 1857 - 1864.

We must further keep in mind that, back in 1785, when Connecticut was debating this legislation, we had just come out of a long war, with much hard feeling on both sides. There would have been very little desire - even, probably, active opposition - to perpetuating the use of names of denominations of coins, even though we would have, and did, perpetuate the size, weight, and composition of these, at least in the lowest denominations. With a ready-made and accepted term lying around, like "coppers", there would have been no excuse whatever to have used the term "halfpence". And the term "cent" hadn't quite been invented yet. (Or, if it may have already been known to a select few, it hadn't become widespread.) This did come along shortly, though. Just barely in time, two years later, to have been adapted by Massachusetts, who thus became the first government, anywhere, to have used this denomination on a real coin. (Sierra Leone was second; the U.S.A. was third.)



- ● Regarding RF-44 (CNL, April 1973, p. 398). Counterfeit "peices of brass and Tin".

- from Walter H. Breen

In all probability the counterfeits causing the problem in 1700 were of the following kinds:

- (1). Cast halfpence of William III, in brass.
- (2). Cast copies of British tin farthings of Charles II.

Counterfeits of the former kind have been seen in collections and noncollector accumulations side by side with the genuine. Counterfeit tin pieces presumably would have crumbled to powder as did the vast majority of the genuine.

- ● More on RF-44.



- from Charles E. Funk, Jr.

We must take care not to try to read late-twentieth-century meaning into late-seventeenth-century usage. Thus, it is highly probable, if not entirely certain, that "brass" as used in the legislation quoted did not connote "brass" as currently understood.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) indicates that "brass" formerly encompassed all alloys of copper. The term "bronze" didn't even enter the language until well into the eighteenth century. Further, "brass" enjoys fairly venerable standing as a substitute term for "copper", even up into the seventeenth century. Finally, "brass" has long been a generic term for copper money, as well as a slang term for money in general.

So, having in mind that "peices of brass and Tin" almost certainly meant "pieces of copper and tin", we can begin to look at the question with somewhat a different point of view. Firstly, of course, Crosby himself offered a tentative explanation of the legislation in the two paragraphs preceding the one containing the quotation (still on page 144 where Crosby notes the "New Yorke Token" which is found in brass and tin, and the "New England Stiver", in copper; JCS). Secondly, I'll offer the following for consideration and possible rebuttal :

Shortly previous to the time of this legislation (1700), the English monarchs were, in fact, issuing minor coinage in both copper and tin. This began with Charles II, who issued copper halfpence and farthings in 1672 - 1675 (farthings also in 1679) and tin farthings in 1684 - 1685. It continued with James II, who issued tin halfpence and farthings in the late 1680s, and with William and Mary's tin and copper issues on into the '90s, followed by William's coppers into 1701. Thus there was no shortage of tin and "brass" coinage lying around for potential counterfeiters to imitate.

But, you may be saying, these are, at best, halfpence. The legislation complains of the counterfeiting of coins "at the rate of a penny each." True, but now it becomes necessary to remind ourselves of the low esteem in which England regarded its colonists. Take a look at the Rosa Americana coinage, which was provided by the "mother country" to its "daughter" just a few years later. The "twopence" is the size of a penny, the "penny" of a halfpenny, and the "halfpenny" of a farthing. In short, every coin was given twice the value of the same size of coin back "at home."

A lot of guesswork here, I know, but I think it makes a fairly plausible story.

● ● Regarding RF-45 (CNL, April 1973, p.399). The Unknown Coinage for Carolina.

● from Raymond H. Williamson
Lynchburg, Virginia

Mr. Borell's coinage plan was mentioned in 1787, ten months after the Crosby quotation from the Massachusetts Centinel, in a letter from a young South Carolinian, John Hinckley Mitchell (then in London) to the Governor of his State, Thomas Pinckney. This time, Mr. Borell has an additional "I" in his name, but still no initials or first name, and his plan was for a "copper coinage" for South Carolina (which never hatched) -- rather than for " £ 30,000 in silver and copper" per the Centinel. This Mitchell letter of August 25, 1787 appears in the rare book Mitchell-Boulton Correspondance -- 1787-1792 Relative to Coinages for South Carolina and the United States by Clarence Blair Mitchell (1931), a descendant of John Hinckley Mitchell. The letter follows:

To His Excellency Thomas Pinckney, Esquire,
Governor and Commander in Chief of the State
of South Carolina, &c., &c.

Sir:

Having been informed that Mr. Borell has declined his engagement with our State for supplying them with a Copper Coinage, for the Paper Medium, I have taken the liberty of addressing your Excellency on the subject, and at the same time have enclosed my proposals for furnishing the State with £20,000 or a greater sum, if required. I have not the least doubt the same confidence will be placed in me, as in a foreigner—particularly when my character and connections are enquired into—of which my Father-in-Law, Mr. Abercromby, as well as many gentlemen of the Honorable House of Assembly can fully testify.

Your Excellency will please to observe that I can with confidence assure you of my fulfilling every engagement I may have the honour of making with the State, and will give any security which may be required for that purpose.

As perhaps it may prove more agreeable that my offers should be accompanied with a specimen of my intentions, I have the honor to enclose for your Excellency's and the Honorable General Assembly's inspection, some copper money, intended as a new coinage for the East Indies. This will show the skill and ingenuity of the artist, who is, without exception, equal to any in Europe, and which same person will execute the coinage now proposed by me —should it meet with approbation. But I also beg leave to notice to your Excellency that the coin for our State will not only be much superior in quality and goodness to the India coin, but equal if not superior in every respect to the half-pence coined at the Tower of London. I had intended to have transmitted to your Excellency a few half pence struck on purpose—with the arms of the State of South Carolina —as a more proper specimen of my intentions, and had taken measures for that purpose, but had not sufficient time to execute them before the vessel sailed which conveys this to your Excellency.

I must also beg leave to remark to your Excellency that the Copper British Coin at present in circulation in South Carolina, is not generally understood. It is not of the King's Coinage at the Tower of London, but a base mixed metal, or imitation called here counterfeits—of little or no value—made on purpose by persons who run the risk of the law by so doing, and which base money is bought by persons of every description who come to America, for the purpose of passing them as current.

I trust your Excellency will excuse the trouble I give you on this occasion, but from a knowledge of your Excellency's sentiments for the welfare of our State. I am induced to hope the proposals will meet with your Excellency's approbation, as I am well convinced it will prove very beneficial and advantageous to my country, and I flatter myself, reflect no discredit on me.

I, therefore, beg leave to request that your Excellency will be so obliging as to lay the enclosed proposals, with the specimen, before the Honorable General Assembly at their first meeting. Should they be agreed to, the Assembly will then determine on what impression, motto, &c. they may wish to have struck on the coin, which must be particularly explained in as legible and distinct a manner as possible. . . . I hope your Excellency will pardon me for requesting you will let me have as speedy an answer as possible to this business. Having been so long absent from Charles Town, I wish to return home, as my private affairs require me immediately,—but will defer doing so until I have the honor of hearing from your Excellency, which I request may be addressed to me at the Carolina Coffee House, Birch Lane, London.

I have the honor to be

Yr. Excellency most obedt & most hbl servt,

John Hinckley Mitchell

London, 25 August 1787.

Sent by Seaman Deas, Esq.,
per the Olive Branch.

Mitchell's proposals which accompanied his letter read as follows:

Proposals made by John Hinckley Mitchell to the Honbl General Assembly of the State of South Carolina for furnishing the said State with £20,000 of Copper money.

First. The said John Hinckley Mitchell doth hereby promise and agree to deliver, in the City of Charleston, free of any expense whatever to the Governor, Treasurer or any other person that may be appointed for that purpose, the sum of £20,000 in a copper coin (or a greater sum if required) on the several conditions hereafter mentioned.

2dly. The said sum of £20,000 to be coined in half pence, to be made of fine pure copper, unalloy'd, with milled edges, each half penny to be equal in quality, goodness and weight to those coined at the King's Mint in the Tower of London, with a finer impression and in every respect better coined.

3dly. The half pence shall be impressed with whatever device the Honorable Assembly may think proper to fix upon.

4th. The said sum of £20,000 shall be delivered to the persons appointed to receive the same, in the several sums of one, two, three or five thousand at each time, at the rate

of £1000 per month or £5000 in three months, at the option of the General Assembly, and as they may think proper to order, provided that vessels sail in due time for each respective delivery. Otherwise at every opportunity that offers to convey the same.

5th. The said John Hinckley Mitchell hereby agrees to receive the Paper Medium of the State of South Carolina in return or payment of the said copper coin—the said half pence to be reckoned at and after the rate of 24 to 1 shilling sterling, as usual.

6th. The said John Hinckley Mitchell, or the agent he may authorize for that purpose, shall at the delivery of each sum of copper money, immediately receive the same sum in the paper medium of the State of South Carolina, from the person who may be appointed to deliver it, by the Honorable General Assembly.

Lastly. The said John Hinckley Mitchell engages to fulfill all and every of the above conditions, faithfully and punctually—provided they are approved by the Honorable General Assembly—and has no doubt of the terms and conditions being faithfully executed on their part.

John Hinckley Mitchell

London, 25 August 1787.

And so -- the coinage efforts initiated by Mr. Borel for the State of South Carolina and then "declined" by him, were quickly followed up by those of Mitchell, but without success. While he awaited replies in England, events were taking place across the Atlantic at Philadelphia which were to render Mitchell's efforts useless so far as the State of South Carolina was concerned. The new Constitution had been perfected, and among the several attributes of sovereignty which it took from the several States was that of regulating coinage.

No doubt there are records that will throw more light on Mr. Borel's "Unknown Coinage for South Carolina", and perhaps this data regarding the later involvement of Mitchell will stimulate the search.

The 1790 windup of the Mitchell-Boulton episode for a U.S. Coinage is much better told in Volume 16 of The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Dr. Julian P. Boyd, Editor, (1961), in the fifteen page story "Report on the Copper Coinage." In the latter pages of this reference, a letter is included which perhaps was intentionally omitted from the Mitchell-Boulton Correspondance. This is Mitchell's letter of March 22, 1790 to Tudor Tucker, Congressman from South Carolina, in which Mitchell edited out certain items in the proposal submitted by Boulton on November 25, 1789 and inadvertently edited out his own commission. I would think that Dr. Boyd's eight pages of editorial comments would make delightful reading for our CNL Patrons.

- ● Regarding RF-46 (CNL, April 1973, p.399). The Questionable Coinage of Machin's Mills.

- from Walter H. Breen

The error here is in assuming that Machin's Mill coined coppers at the rate of 48 to the pound. That would entail coinage only slightly less heavy than genuine British coppers. The actual weight standards in use at Newburgh varied greatly, but as some coins from that establishment have been seen weighing less than 100 grains apiece, and comparatively few weigh more, we may take 100 grains as not very far from the average. At the rate of 7000 grains avoirdupois to the pound, that would mean 70 coppers to the pound, or some 70,000 in all. The number is likely to be higher rather than lower, if anything, as some of the imitation halfpence are smaller and thinner than the earlier coppers.

Of course many pieces punch-linked with the Machin's Mill operation were made by parties unknown using dies by James F. Atlee before he signed up fulltime at Newburgh. It is not always possible to tell when some of these things were made, because Atlee worked for the Rahway New Jersey mint in 1786 - 87 and undoubtedly did some diemaking on the side, as for Major Eli Leavenworth and others.

- from ye Editor

The intent of the question regarding Machin's Mill was, I believe, pointed more toward the existing documentation and its validity than toward determining specific numbers. Simms evidently had access to papers or records belonging to Thomas Machin -- but do those papers exist today ? If so, what else do those papers say about Machin? The thousand pounds of copper - as related by Simms - apparently applies only to the year 1789, but the wording would indicate that these papers covered previous years during which "... little seems to have been done." There has always been considerable mystery surrounding Machin's Mill, but here we have an almost casual quotation by a man who apparently reviewed the papers of Thomas Machin and concluded, regarding the operators of the establishment that " ... they never effected much."

- ● Regarding RF-52 (CNL, April 1973, p. 401). Where were the Nova Constellatio coins -- Birmingham or Greenwich ?

- from Eric P. Newman
St. Louis, Missouri

I wrote up this matter in the Numismatic Scrapbook Magazine in January, 1960, p.6, but had not then located the data in the English papers. Enclosed is that data -- it shows that Birmingham was the source. The person who wrote it must have known what he was talking about as he was correcting others.

The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser No. 5252
Thurs. March 16, 1786
page 3, top right corner

" A correspondent observes, that the paragraph which has lately appeared in several papers, respecting a copper coinage in America, is not true. The piece spoken of, bearing the inscription, "Libertas et Justitia, &c." was not made in America, nor by the direction of Congress. It was coined at Birmingham, by the order of a merchant in New York. Many tons were struck from this dye, and many from another; and they are now in circulation in America, as counterfeit halfpence are in England. "

The "paragraph" which gave rise to this comment appeared in several London (England) newspapers during the period March 11 - 14, 1786 including The Morning Herald; The Public Advertiser; The London Chronicle as well as The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser:

" The American Congress have lately made a copper coinage, which is now in general circulation: one side of the halfpenny bears this circular inscription, Libertas et Justitia; round a central cypher U.S. On the reverse is a sun rising amidst Thirteen Stars, circularly inscribed Constellatio nova. "

All the extracts were paragraphs amidst general news produced unsigned and unreferenced.

